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# Media Release



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SOUTHWESTERN U.S. STATES & MEXICO HOLD BI-NATIONAL MEETING TO  
COORDINATE TRADE & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES**

**Yuma, AZ** - More than 70 elected, business and community leaders from both the United States and Mexico met today to develop strategies on transportation, infrastructure and economic development throughout the Arizona-California-Northern Mexico border region. At the time Californians are deciding to fund bond measures for infrastructure projects, southwest representatives convened a fourth meeting to continue formulating opportunities and actions to benefit what it calls the "Southwest Mega-Region". Topics discussed included trade, transportation, border security, the importance of military installations, economic development, goods movement, public health and environmental issues.

"Our challenge is to get the rest of the country to understand the vital importance to the nation's economy, security and well-being that this mega-region plays. The days of planning in isolation are over. We need to think in terms of our region's needs if we are going to remain a significant player in the global economy" stated California State Senator Denise Ducheny.

The meeting represented an extension of efforts to enhance the planning and infrastructure development for goods movement in Southern California and neighboring areas. By identifying priority infrastructure improvements and forging economic links among Southern California, Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico, the creation of a southwest alliance would foster a 'mega region' with the size, diversity,

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industrial strength and geographic advantages to be a competitive force internationally.

"Through this meeting, elected and business leaders in the border states are laying the foundation to transform this region into a true economic powerhouse," said El Centro City Councilmember Jon Edney, chair of SCAG's Southwest Compact Task Force.

Mexico is now the largest recipient of California exports, and imports from Mexico have more than doubled in the past decade to more than \$20 billion. The rapid growth of goods movement in Southern California and the increase in trade opportunities since the passage of NAFTA make economic integration and bi-national infrastructure development vital to the mega-region.

Ricardo Martinez, representing Mexicali economic development interests, stressed the importance of an integrated economic development strategy affecting manufacturing, services and supply channels in the entire southwest region.

Yuma Mayor Lawrence Nelson stressed the vital importance of the military's operations in the southwest region and he also noted "the key to global economic competitiveness is building partners with one another in the region."

Lake Forest City Councilmember Richard Dixon emphasized the importance of a blueprint for future action that includes formation of a southwest alliance composed of partners that will prepare action items on economic development, border issues and trade. "We have a huge opportunity. We need to have a united front to maintain our competitiveness."

Other speakers at the meeting included:

- Hon. Russell Jones, Arizona House of Representatives
- Hon. Amanda Aguirre, Arizona House of Representatives
- Hon. Reuben Espino, Mayor of San Luis Rio Colorado, Mexico
- Hasan Ikhrata, SCAG Planning and Policy Director
- Jack Kyser, Chief Economist, Los Angeles Economic Development Council
- Tim Kelley, President/CEO, Imperial Valley Economic Development Council

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- Chris Camacho, President/CEO, Greater Yuma Economic Development Council
- Pedro Orso Delgado, District Director, Caltrans District 11
- Paul Patane, District Engineer, Arizona Department of Transportation
- Tom Topuzes, CEO, Thomas Topuzes & Associates
- Bob Stull, Deputy City Administrator, City of Yuma
- C. Kevin Eatherly, Lead Project Manager, Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation

For more information about the bi-national hearing, please call Jeff Lustgarten at 323/466-3445.

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